

Guyana

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

UNICEF estimated that 27 percent of children ages 5 to 14 in Guyana were working in 2000.¹⁹⁰³ It is common to see children engaged in street trading.¹⁹⁰⁴ There are reports of an increase in prevalence of child labor.¹⁹⁰⁵ Though the government acknowledges the growing street children phenomenon, there is still a need to address the problem sufficiently.¹⁹⁰⁶ Children are known to work as porters, domestic servants, waitresses, in sawmills and markets, and are also engaged in prostitution, agricultural work, mining, and the illicit drug trade.¹⁹⁰⁷ Girls in the Hinterland area in particular are recruited to work as domestic servants and waitresses in restaurants.¹⁹⁰⁸ The Guyana Human Rights Association reported that there were cases where girls as young as 11 are recruited to work in bars and restaurants as prostitutes.¹⁹⁰⁹ Children are also engaged in prostitution in ports, gold mining areas, and the capital city of Georgetown.¹⁹¹⁰ Young women and children are known to be trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation mostly within the country.¹⁹¹¹

¹⁹⁰³ Government of Guyana, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2000 -Guyana*, UNICEF, April 27, 2004, Table 42a, 51; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/guyana/guyana.htm>. For more information on the definition of working children, please see the section in the front of the report entitled Statistical Definitions of Working Children. In 2002, approximately 11,000 children ages 15 to 17 years (and of legal working age) were formally employed. See Editorial, "Putting Children First," *Stabroek News*, January 31, 2004; available from <http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/news401/ns40131.htm>.

¹⁹⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Guyana*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27901.htm>, ILO-IPEC Official, Active IPEC Projects as of May 1, 2004, USDOL Official, 2004. UNICEF reports that 19 percent of children ages 5 to 14 were considered involved in labor activities. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention*, prepared by Government of Guyana, pursuant to Concluding Observations: Guyana, February 26, 2004; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/385c2add1632f4a8c12565a9004dc311/9a78affeb522f20dc1256e6d0038946a/\\$FILE/G0440531.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/385c2add1632f4a8c12565a9004dc311/9a78affeb522f20dc1256e6d0038946a/$FILE/G0440531.pdf).

¹⁹⁰⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Guyana 2004*, para. 49. There are reports that the child labor trend has worsened over the past 3 years. See Editorial, "Putting Children First."

¹⁹⁰⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Guyana 2004*, para. 51.

¹⁹⁰⁷ George K. Dannas, *Guyana The Situation of Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labor: A Rapid Assessment*, International Labour Office, Port of Spain, October 2002, 34.

¹⁹⁰⁸ UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Guyana*, [hard copy on file] [cited May 22 2003]. See also Editorial, "Putting Children First."

¹⁹⁰⁹ ECPAT International, *Guyana*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited May 13, 2004]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/. There is a lack of sufficient studies and specific data on the sexual exploitation of children in Guyana. There is a need to train law enforcement officials, social workers, and prosecutors on managing cases of child sexual exploitation in a child-friendly manner. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Guyana 2004*, para. 53 and 54.

¹⁹¹⁰ ECPAT International, *Guyana*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Guyana*, Section 6f.

¹⁹¹¹ Foreign victims are also trafficked to Guyana from Brazil and Venezuela, and may be transited through Guyana to Suriname. See U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Guyana*, Washington, D.C., June 14, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33198.htm#guyana>.

Primary education in Guyana is free and compulsory for children ages 5 to 15 years.¹⁹¹² In 1999, the gross primary enrollment rate was 120.2 percent (118.3 percent for girls and 122.2 percent for boys), and the net primary enrollment rate was 98.4 percent (97.1 percent for girls and 99.7 percent for boys).¹⁹¹³ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Guyana. Though the government has made concerted efforts to increase enrollment rates and to bring dropout children back into school, dropout rates, particularly among boys, remain high.¹⁹¹⁴

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Factories Act and Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act of 1999 sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.¹⁹¹⁵ The Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act prohibits children from working in “industrial undertakings” or on a ship, unless their family members are employed in those undertakings. Penalties are a fine of USD 30 for the first offense and USD 12 for subsequent offenses.¹⁹¹⁶ Forced labor is prohibited by the Constitution.¹⁹¹⁷ Prostitution of a child under 13 years is illegal according to the Criminal Law Offenses Act.¹⁹¹⁸ Sections 83-86 of the Act prohibit the abduction of unmarried girls. Although there is no particular offense of child pornography in Guyana, Section 350 of the Act regulates selling, publishing, or exhibiting an obscene matter.¹⁹¹⁹ The Ministry of Labor lacks sufficient inspectors to enforce child labor laws effectively, according to the U.S. Department of State.¹⁹²⁰

¹⁹¹² National Development Strategy Secretariat, *National Development Strategy, Vol. 3: The Social Sectors, Ch. 20: Education Policy (draft)*, Ministry of Finance, [online] March 26, 1996 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.guyana.org/NDS/chap20.htm>. See also UNESCO, *Guyana - Education System*, [online] 2001 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.unesco.org/iau/cd-data/gy.rtf>.

¹⁹¹³ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003. Statistics from the WDI 2004 presented in this year’s TDA report may differ slightly from statistics for the same year from the WDI 2003 because of statistical adjustments made in the school-age population or corrections to education data.

¹⁹¹⁴ The quality of education, teacher availability and training, and wider educational disparity in the hinterland region contribute to higher dropout rates. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Guyana 2004*, para. 47.

¹⁹¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Guyana*, Section 6d. The Employment Act defines a child as under 14 years of age, and a young person as under 16 years of age. See Government of Guyana, *Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (Chapter 99:01) [consolidated up to 1973]*, No. 14 of 1933; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org>.

¹⁹¹⁶ *Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (Chapter 99:01)*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Guyana*, Section 6d.

¹⁹¹⁷ *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*, Article 140; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Guyana/guyana96.html>.

¹⁹¹⁸ Interpol, *Legislation on Sexual Offences Against Children*, [database online] [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.interpol.int/public/Children/SexualAbuse/NationalLaws/csaGuyana.asp>. It is of concern to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that the age of sexual consent is age 13 in Guyana. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Guyana 2004*, paragraph 20.

¹⁹¹⁹ Interpol, *Legislation on Sexual Offences Against Children*.

¹⁹²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Guyana*, Section 6d.

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Guyana operates a drop-in center and a shelter for street children. It was established as part of a UNICEF program and operates in collaboration with the Human Services Ministry, the City Constabulary, and the Ministry of Education's Schools' Welfare Department. The center operates 24-hours a day and offers some basic education and vocational training opportunities.¹⁹²¹ The Ministry of Labor, Human Services and Social Security has several programs to eliminate child labor. These programs include participating in a rapid assessment carried out by ILO-IPEC that revealed the existence of the worst forms of child labor.¹⁹²² A campaign by the National Commission on the Rights of the Child to improve birth registrations resulted in more registrations in 2002 as compared to the previous year.¹⁹²³

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified Convention 138	✓
Ratified Convention 182	✓
ILO-IPEC Associated Member	✓
National Plan for Children	
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan (Trafficking)	✓

The Minister of Labor, Human Services, and Social Security leads an interagency task force on combating trafficking in persons in Guyana.¹⁹²⁴ The government appointed an official to oversee anti-trafficking efforts of the government, NGOs, and law enforcement officers.¹⁹²⁵ In an effort to expand public awareness on the problem of trafficking in persons, the Minister has lead a series of meetings with government officials, religious leaders, business representatives, miners, law enforcement officials, teachers, and other community members to discuss actions to take to combat trafficking.¹⁹²⁶ In June and October 2004, government officials, NGOs, and community members participated in training lead by the IOM and the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States to sensitize participants on the impact of trafficking on a national and regional level, and begin development of a comprehensive response to trafficking in persons in Guyana.¹⁹²⁷

¹⁹²¹ See Angela Osborne, "Drop In Center Offers a Beacon of Hope For Street Children," *Stabroek News*, May 2, 2004; available from <http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/news402/ns4050216.htm>. See also UNICEF and Government of Guyana, *Progress Report Towards Attaining the Goals of the World Summit for Children*, October 2000, 31; available from http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/how_country/edr_guyana_en.PDF.

¹⁹²² "Labour Ministry Strives for Social Sector Development - Minister Bisnauth," *Guyana Chronicle*, April 17, 2004 2004; available from <http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/gyextejs.htm>. ILO-IPEC received funding from the Government of Canada to conduct a rapid assessment of the worst forms of child labor in Guyana that produced an overall description of the child labor situation that was published in a report. See George K. Dannas, *Guyana The Situation of Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labor: A Rapid Assessment*, 3-5.

¹⁹²³ Embassy of Guyana Washington DC, *17,688 Births Registered in 2002*, (Guyana Monthly Update, June 2003), [online] 2003 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.guyana.org/Update/june2003.html>.

¹⁹²⁴ U.S. Embassy- Georgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 754*, August 3, 2004.

¹⁹²⁵ White House Office of the Press Secretary, *Memorandum for the Secretary of State: Presidential Determination No. 2004-46: Presidential Determination with Respect to Foreign Governments' Efforts Regarding Trafficking in Persons*, press release, White House, Washington, DC, September 10, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/prsrl/36127.htm>.

¹⁹²⁶ U.S. Embassy- Georgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 754*. See also U.S. Embassy- Georgetown, *unclassified telegram no. 664*, July 14, 2004.

¹⁹²⁷ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Guyana-Counter Trafficking Seminar*, press briefing notes, International Organization for Migration, Washington, DC, October 22 2004. See also International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Guyana-Regional Counter Trafficking Training*, press briefing notes, International Organization for Migration, Washington, DC, June 15, 2004.

From 2003 to 2015, Guyana will be receiving USD 52 million from various donors to support its Education For All initiatives.¹⁹²⁸ The three major EFA initiatives in Guyana are (1) improving the quality of the teaching force in the Hinterland, (2) enhancing the teaching/learning environment in primary schools, and (3) strengthening school community partnerships.¹⁹²⁹ The government is also implementing a Basic Education Access and Management Support Project to improve school performance through curricular and pedagogical reform, education management reform, and school infrastructure development.¹⁹³⁰ In August 2004, the Secondary School Reform Project (SSRP) concluded. The project assisted the government to improve on the quality, relevance, equity and efficiency of education in Guyana.¹⁹³¹ The Guyana Education Access Project is an ongoing project with similar objectives as the SSRP, and is supported by the Government of the United Kingdom.¹⁹³²

In January 2004, the Ministry of Education launched the Basic Competency Certificate Program, which is piloted in six secondary schools and four instructions centers, in an effort to provide affordable and high quality vocation education to older children.¹⁹³³ As part of the Guyana Basic Education Teacher Training Program, three teachers' training centers carry-out activities in the Hinterlands.¹⁹³⁴ The Ministry of Labor, Human Services and Social Security launched a school uniform assistance program for the 2003-2004 school year that provides families with vouchers to purchase school uniforms for approximately 10,000 students of all levels to help remove what is sometimes an obstacle for school attendance.¹⁹³⁵ In an effort to further literacy and numeracy achievement goals, the Ministry of Education provided core-subject textbooks throughout the country for schools through the Fast Track Project for the 2003-2004 school year.¹⁹³⁶

¹⁹²⁸ Guyana is in the first set of seven countries eligible for the Education For All Fast Track Initiative. See Ministry of Education, *EFA Fast Track Funds Approved for Guyana*, [press release] 2003 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.sdn.org.gy/minedu/about/news-220103-01.htm>.

¹⁹²⁹ Funding is provided through IDB. See Ministry of Education, *Major MOE Projects*, [online] 2004 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.sdn.org.gy/minedu/about/projects.htm>.

¹⁹³⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹³¹ This project was initially funded in 1996. See World Bank, *Secondary School Reform Project*, [online] May 13, 2004 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P007269>.

¹⁹³² Ministry of Education, *Major MOE Projects*.

¹⁹³³ Editorial, "Putting Children First."

¹⁹³⁴ This project is funded through the Canadian International Development Agency. See Embassy of Guyana Washington DC, *CPCE Goes to Region One*, (Guyana Monthly Update, September 2003), [online] 2003 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.guyana.org/Update/sept2003.html>.

¹⁹³⁵ The Cabinet approved G\$34 million (USD 190,476) for the program and the Ministry of Labor will be responsible for the program. See Embassy of Guyana Washington DC, *School Uniform Assistance Available*, (Guyana Monthly Update, July 2003), [online] 2003 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.guyana.org/Update/july2003.html>.

¹⁹³⁶ Embassy of Guyana Washington DC, *\$545 Million for Book Distribution*, (Guyana Monthly Update, July 2003), [online] 2003 [cited May 13, 2004]; available from <http://www.guyana.org/Update/sept2003.html>.